



National Environmental Public Health Tracking Week

Asthma and Outdoor Air Pollution Don't Mix: Tips for Controlling Your Asthma

In the United States, about 25 million people live with asthma. That's about one out of every 12 people, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). And if you or your child is one of them, you've probably experienced the panic that comes with an asthma attack. When you are outside, things like ozone and particle pollution can be triggers for an asthma attack. As we head into summer, here is some information that may help you decrease your risk of asthma attacks related to outdoor air pollution.

Air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse and trigger attacks. Adults and children with asthma may be more sensitive to outdoor air pollution exposures such as ground level ozone and particulate matter. Ozone is often found in smog and particle pollution is often found in haze, smoke, and dust. Both can irritate the airways, causing wheezing, chest tightness and coughing. Long-term exposure to ozone and particle pollution has been found to injure the lungs and has been shown to cause asthma in children.

A tool from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is helping us understand the relationship between asthma and the outdoor air we breathe. The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network) is a tool that can help us understand the relationships between some environmental and health problems, including asthma. It does this by collecting and sharing data that would traditionally be kept separately by many government and public health agencies. Bringing it all together helps us to discover the connections between our health and the environment.

The Tracking Network is helping us map how many people have asthma and their location during asthma-related hospital admissions. This information can help public health officials deliver the right help for issues in these communities, such as policies that keep the air clean. The Tracking Network website also provides tips that can be used by individuals to help lower their risk of asthma attacks, such as limiting outside activities when the air quality is unhealthy.

Asthma is a life-long disease but it can be managed. Understanding how outdoor air pollution and asthma are connected is part of that process. Use the following information and tips to help decrease your risk of an asthma attack caused by outdoor air pollution.

Ozone is often the worst on hot summer days, especially in the afternoons and early evenings. Particle pollution can be high any time of year, even in winter. It can be especially high:

- when the weather is calm and air pollution builds up.
- near busy roads, during rush hour traffic, and around factories.
- when smoke is in the air from wood stoves, fireplaces, or burning plants.

Protect yourself and your family:

- Know what your risk for asthma is and how sensitive you are to air pollution.
- Know when air pollution may be high in your area and reduce your exposure. Use the Environmental Protection Agency's [Air Quality Index](#) to get accurate information.
- Plan activities when and where outdoor air pollution levels are lower.
- Listen to your body and keep your medicine with you when you are active outdoors.
- See your health care provider when you need to and follow an asthma self-management plan. CDC's National Asthma Control Program has [tools](#) to help you.

Learn more about the Environmental Public Health Tracking at www.cdc.gov/ephtracking and asthma at www.cdc.gov/asthma.

Breathe Easier and Help Your Heart: Six Steps to Protect Your Heart from Air Pollution

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. About one of every four deaths in the United States is caused by heart disease. The air you breathe may increase your risk for developing heart problems. February kicks off American Heart Month, reminding us that heart health should be important to everyone. Many of us understand that the risk of heart disease is affected by things like obesity, poor diet, and lack of exercise. But did you know that exposure to air pollution can increase your risk of heart disease?

People who breathe fine particle pollution either short-term or long-term have more heart and lung problems than people who do not breathe this kind of air pollution. Fine particle pollution is generated by burning fossil fuels. It is dangerous because it is made up of tiny particles that are small enough to be inhaled deeply into lungs, where they can affect the heart, lungs, and blood vessels.

The Tracking Network makes it easy to see information and recognize factors about certain community qualities that may cause a higher risk of heart problems related to air pollution. These factors include issues like a high rate of poverty, more people without insurance, higher exposure to auto exhaust due to more people living in the community, and more. These risk factors are associated with more heart and lung problems, hospital visits, and deaths in areas with high amounts of air pollution.

Tracking Network information about fine particle pollution's effect on health allows us to predict the positive results our actions could have. For example, we can now estimate that reducing fine particle pollution by 10% could prevent more than 13,000 deaths across the nation. This information can be used to help public health officials give these communities the help they most need, such as policies that keep the air clean.

You can use the following tips to help protect your heart from air pollution:

1. Know what your risk for cardiovascular disease is and how sensitive you are to air pollution.
2. Know when air pollution may be high in your area and reduce your exposure. Use the [Air Quality Index](#) to get accurate information.
3. Plan activities when and where pollution levels are lower.
4. Listen to your body.
5. See your health care provider when you need to.
6. Keep your medication with you.

Learn more about air quality and heart disease in your area, on the Tracking Network's [Info by Location tool](#).